CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 11 MAY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE TRANSMITTING A PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED IN NEW DELHI ON 11 MAY

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the Press Statement issued in New Delhi on May 11, 1998. (see annex)

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Signed) Savitri Kunadi
Ambassador

GE.98-61354

PRESS STATEMENT

As announced by the Prime Minister this afternoon, today India conducted three underground nuclear tests in the Pokhran range. The tests conducted today were with a fission device, a low yield device and a thermonuclear device. The measured yields are in line with expected values. Measurements have also confirmed that there was no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere. These were contained explosions like the experiment conducted in May 1974.

These tests have established that India has proven capability for a weaponised nuclear programme. They also provide a valuable database which is useful in the design of nuclear weapons of different yields for different applications and for different delivery systems. Further, they are expected to carry Indian scientists towards a sound computer simulation capability which may be supported by sub-critical experiments, if considered necessary.

The Government is deeply concerned, as were previous Governments, about the nuclear environment in India's neighbourhood. These tests provide reassurance to the people of India that their national security interests are paramount and will be promoted and protected. Succeeding generations of Indians would also rest assured that contemporary technologies associated with nuclear option have been passed on to them in this the 50th year of our Independence.

It is necessary to highlight today that India was in the vanguard of nations which ushered in the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963 due to environmental concerns. Indian representatives have worked in various international forums, including the Conference on Disarmament, for universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable arrangements for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The Government would like to reiterate its support to efforts to realise the goal of a truly comprehensive international arrangement which would prohibit underground nuclear testing of all weapons as well as related experiments described as 'sub-critical' or 'hydronuclear'.

India would be prepared to consider being an adherent to some of the undertakings in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. But this cannot obviously be done in a vacuum. It would necessarily be an evolutionary process from concept to commitment and would depend on a number of reciprocal activities.

We would like to reaffirm categorically that we will continue to exercise the most stringent control on the export of sensitive technologies, equipment and commodities -- especially those related to weapons of mass destruction. Our track record has been impeccable in this regard. Therefore we expect recognition of our responsible policy by the international community.

India remains committed to a speedy process of nuclear disarmament leading to total and global elimination of nuclear weapons. Our adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention is evidence of our commitment to any global disarmament regime which is non-discriminatory and verifiable. We shall also be happy to participate in the negotiations for the conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Geneva based Conference on Disarmament.

In our neighbourhood we have many friends with whom relations of fruitful cooperation for mutual benefit have existed and deepened over a long period. We assure them that it will be our sincere endeavour to intensify and diversify those relations further for the benefit of all our peoples. For India, as for others, the prime need is for peaceful cooperation and economic development.

New Delhi
11 May, 1998

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